

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 0900

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MNUC, PFOR, PARM, KS, FR

SUBJ: MOST MINISTER CHOE PRESSES FORWARD ON SCIENCE AND
ENERGY COOPERATION

REF: (A) STATE 20557 (B) SEOUL 0624

1. DURING CONVERSATION ON FEBRUARY 5, AMBASSADOR
REITERATED APPRECIATION TO MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY CHOE HYUNG-SUP FOR WISE DECISION ROKG HAD
MADE TO CANCEL FRENCH REPROCESSING FACILITY PURCHASE. MINISTER
WASTED NO TIME IN PUSHING ON TO NEW BUSINESS. MINISTER
INDICATED HE WOULD LIKE TO HOLD MEETING ON FUTURE
SCIENCE AND ENERGY COOPERATION PROPOSED DURING ACTING ASSISTANT
SECRETARY KRATZER'S VISIT EARLY OR LATE IN APRIL. MINISTER
MUST ATTEND SCIENCE DAY CELEBRATIONS IN KOREA APRIL 21,
BUT SAID HE COULD TRAVEL TO WASHINGTON BEFORE OR PREFERABLY
AFTER THAT. CHOE HOPES TWO SIDES CAN HAVE SUBSTANTIAL
COMMUNICATION PRIOR TO MEETING REGARDING VARIOUS POSSIBLE
AGENDA TOPICS SO THAT MEETING ITSELF CAN GET DOWN TO
CONCRETE DISCUSSIONS AND AGREEMENT ON SPECIFIC PROJECTS.
HE IS PREPARING PAPER BASED ON HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH
MR. KRATZER WHICH HE SAID HE WOULD CONVEY TO US
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SHORTLY AS BASIS FOR BEGINNING DIALOGUE PREPARATORY TO

APRIL MEETING.

2. COMMENTING ON HOPES FOR MEETING, CHOE SAID HE REALIZED THAT IT WAS NOT GOING TO BE POSSIBLE FOR US TO HELP IN ALL WAYS KOREA MIGHT LIKE. IT WAS MOST IMPORTANT THAT PRELIMINARY INTERCHANGE BE AS FRANK AS POSSIBLE AND THAT USG BE AS SPECIFIC AS IT COULD IN ADVANCE IN SAYING WHAT IT COULD AND COULD NOT DO. SO AS TO AVOID FUTURE MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND NEEDLESS DISCUSSIONS AT MEETING ITSELF. CHOE ALSO REITERATED POINT HE HAD MADE TO ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY KRATZER THAT COOPERATION ARRANGEMENTS SHOULD BE MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL AND ON A MUTUAL COST-SHARING BASIS. KOREA, HE STRESSED, WAS NOT ASKING FOR HANDOUTS, ALTHOUGH CHOE DID MENTION THAT SMALL AMOUNT OF GRANT ASSISTANCE WOULD BE MOST WELCOME IN FINANCING TECHNICAL EXCHANGES WHICH IN PAST YEARS HAVE PROVED EXTREMELY USEFUL.

3. IN COURSE CONVERSATION, CHOE ALSO MENTIONED THAT PRESIDENT PARK HAD JUST TRANSFERRED LARGE NEW RESPONSIBILITY FOR KOREAN NATURAL RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT TO MOST FROM MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY. MINISTER SAID KOREA HAD NOT DONE SUFFICIENT RESOURCE AND GEOLOGICAL SURVEYING AND THAT THAT WOULD BE PRIME ORDER OF BUSINESS. HE TENTATIVELY PLANNED TO SET UP NEW INSTITUTE SIMILAR TO KOREAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR THIS WORK. WHILE MOST WAS JUST INITIATING PLANNING FOR CARRYING OUT NEW RESPONSIBILITY, MINISTER THOUGHT THIS MIGHT BE ONE ADDITIONAL AREA FOR DISCUSSION AT APRIL MEETING.

4. IN MEETING IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING DISCUSSION WITH CHOE, FONMIN PARK TONG-JIN ALSO URGED EARLY AND SERIOUS ATTENTION BE GIVEN TO PLANNING FOR APRIL MEETING. PARK, AS HAD CHOE, STRESSED THAT ROKG HAD MADE MOST DIFFICULT DECISION ON REPROCESSING FACILITY ON BASIS BROADER RELATIONSHIP WITH US AND THAT IT NOW IMPORTANT TO MOVE AHEAD PROMPTLY AND REALISTICALLY ON SCIENCE AND ENERGY COOPERATION WHICH SHOULD PROVE BENEFICIAL TO BOTH COUNTRIES.

5. IN RESPONSE TO BOTH CHOE AND PARK'S REMARKS AMBASSADOR UNDERLINED SINCERITY OF OUR APPRECIATION FOR ROKG
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DECISION, POINTING OUT THAT WE BELIEVED KOREA WOULD RECOGNIZE INCREASINGLY IT A MOST WISE ONE FROM VIEWPOINT KOREA'S SCIENTIFIC AND ENERGY INTERESTS. THE AMBASSADOR INDICATED DESIRABILITY OF PLANNING CAREFULLY FOR APRIL MEETING SO THAT IT COULD BE PRODUCTIVE.

COMMENT: KOREANS CLEARLY ANXIOUS TO MOVE QUICKLY

AND I STRONGLY BELIEVE IT IN OUR INTEREST TO RESPOND
POSITIVELY. ACCORDINGLY, WE ARE NOW PREPARING
MESSAGE CONTAINING FURTHER COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR MOVING AHEAD.
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